

**ELK ARCHERY WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATION**  
**A report from the Elk Archery Working Group**

**1. Describe the proposed recommendation.**

The elk archery working group recommendation first maintains the status quo either sex elk archery permits represented by the following list of districts, bundles, quota ranges and annual quota formulas. These existing permits are valid on all land ownerships within the described districts or portions of districts.

Inside the Missouri River Breaks

HDs 410/417 (biennial quota range 1600 – 1900)

HDs 620/621/622 (biennial quota range 1100 – 1300)

HDs 700/701 (biennial quota range 500 – 820)

Outside the Missouri River Breaks (annual quotas set at 90% of previous year's 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> choice eligible resident/nonresident applicants)

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HDs 401/403/450 HDs 411/412/426/511/530

HDs 420/447/455

HDs 500/570

HDs 502/510 (west of Hwy 310)/520 (south and east of West Fork of Rock Crk)/575

HD 580 (south of Sweetgrass Creek)

HD 590 (and portion of HD 701 north of the Yellowstone River, south of Hwy 12 and west of Sumatra-Myers Rd.)

HDs 702/704/705

To this status quo, the elk archery working group recommends another set of either sex elk archery permits to each of the bundles in and out of the Breaks.

These new permits would be available thru the drawing as a first and only choice.

These new permits would be valid only on private land outside Block Management Areas in a specific bundle.

A person holding one of these new permits could not hunt an antlered bull elk in any other district during any other season that license year.

The number of these new permits would ultimately be set to accommodate the number of outfitted nonresident archery elk hunters in each of these bundles in 2007.

For the 2012 and 2013 hunting seasons, these new permits would be initially available thru the drawing in unlimited fashion only to determine what an appropriate number of limited permits would be needed to accommodate a number of nonresidents equal to the number of outfitted nonresident archery elk hunters in each of these bundles in 2007. These permits would only be valid on private lands outside Block Management Areas. The focus is on the *number* of successful nonresidents—they may or may not be outfitted. After the 2013 hunting season, these new permits would become limited.

These new permits would be initiated in all bundles for the 2012-2013 seasons.

These new permits would remain in place in any one district if the elk population objective was met or maintained OR if an annual harvest prescription was met. This annual harvest prescription would be developed by FWP staff with consideration of achieving a population objective in not more than 6 years.

There would be an assessment of these circumstances every two years within the biennial season setting process. FWP would use population trend surveys and harvest surveys to assist biennial assessments.

If there was no clear and consistent reaching or maintaining a population objective or annual harvest prescription during the two year interval, these new permits would be removed until a subsequent two year evaluation revealed the population objective or annual harvest prescription was clearly and consistently reached.

In addition, the recommendation would maintain the existing working group (to include the specific persons to the extent possible) through at least one 2-year cycle of review for these permits. This group would meet twice annually to assess the effectiveness of this recommendation. In addition to evaluating the elk population status relative to objective and harvest, this group would attempt to assess harvest of bull elk on different permits, elk distribution on public and private lands during the hunting season, effectiveness relative to fundamental objectives (see below), public access levels (looking for no net loss) and outfitted acres. An example of how the permits would appear in the regulation booklet is below (see 401-17).

--- HD 401 Sweetgrass Hills ---

**General Elk License.**

- Sept 01 - Oct 14 -Antlerless Elk. Archery Only Season.
- Oct 20 - Nov 25 -Antlerless Elk. Only youth ages 12-15 and hunters with a PTHFV.

**Elk Permit. Drawing only. Apply by June 1.**

**401-15: 170 permits. Only valid in HDs 401, 403 and 450. ArchEquip Only.**

- Sept 01 - Oct 14 -Either-sex Elk. Archery Only Season.

**401-17: Unlim permits. Must apply first and only choice. Valid only on private lands outside Block Management Areas in HDs 401, 403 and 450. Permit holder may not hunt bull elk in any other HD during any season. ArchEquip Only.**

- Sept 01 - Oct 14 -Either-sex Elk. Archery Only Season.

**401-20: 30 permits. Only valid in HDs 401 and 403.**

- Sept 01 - Oct 14 -Either-sex Elk. Archery Only Season.
- Oct 20 - Nov 25 -Either-sex Elk.

**Elk B License. Drawing only. Apply by June 1.**

**401-80: 150 licenses. Only valid in HDs 401 and 403.**

- Sept 01 - Oct 14 -Antlerless Elk. Archery Only Season.
- Oct 20 - Nov 25 -Antlerless Elk.

## 2. What are the objectives of this proposed change?

The elk archery working group identified the following objectives.

- Maintain elk on public land proportional to available habitat
- Maximize satisfaction of user groups with season structure/regulations
  - resident rifle hunters
  - resident bow hunters
  - non-resident hunters
  - landowners
- Minimize negative local economic impact
  - Businesses
  - outfitters

- landowners
- Meet population objectives
- Manage wildlife as a public trust
- Maintain Montana balance between commercial/landowner and sportsman interests
  - Minimize exclusive access (i.e., fee hunting only) to public wildlife
  - Maintain opportunities for commercial benefit for landowners
- Promote access to private and public lands
- Keep regulations as simple as possible
- Minimize regulation changes over time
- Maintain consistency of regulations across permit areas

The operating assumption behind this recommendation is that the new set of permits represents sufficient incentive for landowners to increase access and harvest (where needed) during both the archery and rifle seasons. This in turn may result in more opportunity for public hunters either in new or additional access to private lands or new or adjusted elk presence on public or private lands already open to public access if elk distribution is positively adjusted. The economics associated with nonresident hunters is addressed by increased drawing odds for nonresident hunters for these permits due to the “negative attraction” to resident hunters because of permit conditions (private land only, no bull anywhere else, first and only choice).

### **3. How will the success of this proposal be measured?**

Fundamentally, the two year review would look to gauge effectiveness as it related to reaching and maintaining population objective. That process would include Commission process as it relates to biennial season setting.

Additionally, the recommendation would maintain the existing working group (to include the specific persons to the extent possible) through at least one 2-year cycle of review for these permits. This group would meet twice annually to assess effectiveness of this recommendation as it relates to the fundamental objectives listed above. In addition to evaluating the elk population status relative to objective and harvest, specific reviewing efforts by this group would include assessing harvest of bull elk on different permits, elk distribution on public and private lands during the hunting season, effectiveness relative to fundamental objectives (see above), public access levels (looking for no net loss) and outfitted acres.

**4. What is the current population's status in relation to the management objectives?**

HD	OBJECTIVE	2008 STATUS (# OBS)*	2009 STATUS (# OBS)	2010 STATUS (# OBS)	2011 STATUS (# OBS)
401	350	At (413)	At	At (394)	Over (474)
403	NA*	NA	NA	NA	NA
450	100	Over (207)	Over	Over (192)	Over (269)
411/511/530	800	Over (2248)	Over	Over (2269)	Over (1135)
412	300	Over (413)	Over	Over (507)	Over (507)
426	75	NA	NA	NA	NA
420	1200	Over (659)	At	At (1192)	At (1263)
447	700	At (798)	Over	Over (1047)	Over (1160)
455 (with 445)	2200	At (1804)	At	Over (2932)	Over (3572)
500	60	Under (12)	Under	At (50)	Under (14)
570	100	Under (52)	Under	Over (220)	Over (194)
502	50	At (43)	Under	Over (64)	Over (76)
510	10	Under (0)	Under	Under (0)	NA
520	1050	At (901)	At	At (891)	At (1051)
575	225	Over (344)	Over	At (237)	Over (505)
580	975	Over (2290)	Over	Over (2640)	Over (3551)
590	1050	Over (1484)	Over	Over (1598)	Over (1322)
702/704/705	500	NA	NA	Over (325)	Over (325)
410	2300	At (2226)	At	At (2107)	At (2107)
417	400	NA	Over	Over (549)	Over (569)
620/621/622	1400-1650	Over (2868)	Over	Over (2553)	Over (2553)
700/701	200-300	Over (469)	Over	Over (603)	Over (603)

**5. Provide information related to any weather/habitat factors, public or private land use or resident and nonresident hunting opportunity that has relevance to this change.**

The conditions tied to this additional permit (first and only choice, can hunt a bull elk in no other place or season, private land only) are intended to decrease resident interest and so increase nonresident drawing success. The overall intent is to see if these new permits represent enough incentive for landowners to increase access and/or harvest of elk.

The working group also assembled a "parking lot" of issues that may or may not be further incorporated into this or other recommendations (see below). The working group did not explore full consensus on the individual points of this list.

**Potentially common to some or all alternatives (parking lot)**

- *Mandatory reporting*
- *Measure participation in commercial activity (hunt clubs, fee), opinions and perceptions*
- *Surveys (beyond aerial surveys, hunter surveys) for elk distribution during hunting season*
- *Increased and more open communication between landowners and biologists to discuss wildlife and habitat*
- *Guarantee 10% for nonresidents (in statute)*

- *New license preference system applied to permits for nonresidents; elk bonus points eliminated for nonresidents*
- *3-7 year waiting period for rifle permits; landowner preference property exempt*
- *New landowner sponsored permit/license tied to public access; not limited to current definition of designees (statute)*
- *Establish criteria for transition in/out of permits; local working groups (new or existing) used*
- *All areas--archery permit applications separate from rifle permit applications (statute)*
- *Filter for successful elk permit applicants before they draw a B license*
- *Unlimited permits in return for negotiated access to private land (HD 590 test area); other areas?*
- *Archery stamp is prerequisite for permit drawing*
- *Revisit elk mgmt. plan management objectives to include distribution objectives*
- *Provide more incentives to landowners for public access*
- *Unlimited permits in return for negotiated access to private land*
- *A 900 type license valid throughout areas*

**6. Briefly describe the contacts you have made with individual sportsmen or landowners, public groups or organizations regarding this proposal and indicate their comments (both pro and con).**

This recommendation comes from the elk archery working group. It does not represent full consensus of that group. Rather, an 8-2 majority initially supported this alternative as a recommendation to the Commission at the start of this summary writing. Reasons for group members' support are variously stated above. Criticisms include a concern for negative precedent relative to public trust, an additional layer of permits and no additional mobility for resident hunters. After it was communicated FWP was going to recommend the proposal be adopted for public comment without initially stating support or opposition to emphasize the merits of the recommendation itself for public review, an additional person removed his support (taking working group support to 7-3).

The public was welcome at their meetings but no formal comment window was provided—the meetings were dedicated to the working group's deliberations. That said, this product has undoubtedly been circulated to some degree via working group members and their individual conversations outside the work group. The FWP Commission meeting on December 8 will be the first detailed presentation of the recommendation to the public. As a document, the recommendation will be available to public request approximately ten days prior to the December 8 Commission meeting. Any adoption would enjoy a public comment period thru 5:00 PM Monday, January 23, 2011.

Assembled by: Kujala with reviewing edits by Gude, Mitchell and elk archery working group members